

REMARKS

This *amendment* is responsive to the Official Action mailed December 28, 2004. Claims 3-8 and 12-15 as well as new claims 21-30 are pending. Claims 1-2 and 9-11 have been canceled, without prejudice. Claims 16-20 were previously withdrawn. No new fees in excess of the original filing fees are due.

In the Official Action, claims 1-3, 6-11 and 14-15 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as anticipated by Erdman (U.S. Patent No. 6,454,907). Applicant is pleased that claims 4, 5, 12 and 13 were considered to define over the prior art.

Reconsideration of claims 3-8 and 12-15 as well as consideration of new claims 21-30 are respectfully requested. The claims as amended or newly presented particularly and distinctly define the subject matter of the invention. The differences between the invention and the prior art of record are such that the subject matter claimed as a whole is not shown by the prior art to have been known or obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made.

Claim 12 has been rewritten in independent form and includes the subject matter of independent claim 9 as well as dependent claims 10 and 11, which were canceled. Claims 5, 14 and 15 have been amended to depend from claim 12. Claim 12, as well as claims 5, 14 and 15 depending therefrom, are allowable in accordance with the official action, and allowance is hereby respectfully requested.

Claim 13 has been rewritten in independent form and includes the subject matter of independent claim 9 as well as dependent claim 10, which were canceled. Claims 3, 6 and 8 have been amended to depend from claim 13. Claim 13, as well as claims 3-4 and 6-8 depending therefrom, are allowable in accordance with the official action, and allowance is hereby respectfully requested.

Consideration of new claims 21-30 is respectfully requested. The claims are allowable because the prior art lacks the steps of the invention as claimed, and fails to disclose or suggest any comparable combination of steps to that claimed, and providing the advantages of the invention disclosed and claimed only by applicant. Allowance of all these claims is also appropriate and is hereby respectfully requested.

The Examiner's PTO-892 Form

Inspection of the Examiner's PTO-892 form accompanying the Official Action fails to show the formal entry of the reference of Erdman (U.S. Patent No. 6,454,907).

Apparently this is an merely a simple oversight since the rejections applied to the claims only relied upon the reference of Erdman. Indeed, the Official Action clearly recites the involved patent number, again which is (U.S. Patent No. 6,454,907).

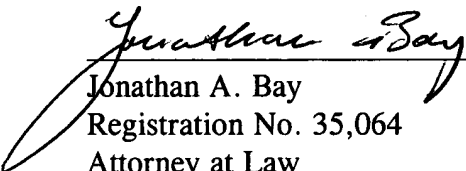
Appropriate correction is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Every effort has been made to particularly and distinctly define the subject matter of the invention. The claims are definite, and are patentable over the prior art of record. The differences between the invention and the prior art are such that the subject matter claimed as a whole would not have been known or obvious to a person of ordinary skill in the art. Reconsideration, and allowance of all the pending claims, are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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